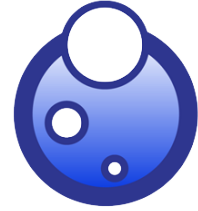


Xplore Dive Trip Report

North Stradbroke Island 10-13 July 2011”



Ready for a great weekend's diving, I arrived at the ferry terminal nice and early on the Friday evening, awaiting the other members of the crew, Scotty and Hayley, who would accompany me to meet up with Karen and Greg who were already on the island. As the ferry approached, Scotty and Hayley showed up at the same time, as well as some members of another dive club who would be diving with us at the weekend. The ferry arrived and our boat captain Ken rocked up in his troopie to carry the keen divers and their gear across Moreton Bay to Stradbroke Island.

Upon arriving at the cozy beach house accommodation in Point Lookout, we decided to dump our gear and join Karen and Greg who were already enjoying drinks at the local bowls club with some members of the Uni-dive club. Upon arriving at the bowls club, we were told that the food wasn't the best in the world, so we opted to sit around the table and exchange stories of previous diving experiences. I also made a point of grabbing a map of Straddie to show the group where we would be diving in the coming days. Some hours later, the tired divers returned to Ken's beach houses and joined the Uni-dive members for a quick discussion before heading to bed. The night was full of unexpected bumps in the night, toe kickings of bed feet (which was quite painful) and someone (you know who you are 😊) stumbling around in the dark.

As the Saturday dawned, our members were keen as mustard, getting geared up and raring to go. We experienced a bit of divers delay when Andy of the Uni-dive group awoke later than most people. But hey, it's a free country. With the boat packed and the members of both clubs ready to go, we crammed into the back of the troopie and launched from cylinder beach at 9am. Ken beelined straight for the shark gutters at Flat Rock, a highlight dive of the area, however, upon arriving it was found that the seas were too choppy to anchor. So we tucked around the corner at the Turtle Cave on the western side of Flat which was a bit calmer. With a quick site briefing given by Andy, we were in the water and descending the anchor line in no time. With Hayley and myself diving in drysuits, we figured that this dive would be a bit of a play dive. The visibility was down to about 5-10m as there was quite a bit of suspended particles and the overcast weather didn't help much either. We managed to hit 25m before encountering a drysuit issue, quickly remedied however. There was a lack of weights on this first boat of the trip, but luckily an abandoned weight belt was found and this provided adequate weight for everyone on the boat who needed it.

After everyone had surfaced, it was decided that the seas at Flat were becoming too rough, so the boat hightailed it back to Shag Rock for the second dive. A lovely easy dive was had in a maximum of 12m water, with up to 15m vis at times. Being a site well known to me, I guided the group straight to the swim through, a highlight at Shag, and after doing that we swam down one trench, had a look around and cut back through a second trench to the area where the boat was anchored, where we finished the dive in a lazy fashion. After the dive, we headed back to the houses to clean gear and share in the dream that Regulators get washed before the soiled booties.

After everyone was refreshed, we made our way up to the point lookout shops to get some supplies, then further around to the South Gorge Walk, which was a very nice way to spend the evening, albeit very windy and a bit rainy toward the end. After completing the walk, and experiencing some awesome views of the Coral Sea and Stradbroke Island, we headed to the Point Lookout Hotel for dinner and drinks. A great way to finish the day.

Sleeping was tough Saturday night, the rain fell hard and heavy on the roof of the beach house, but it wasn't as cold as Friday night. Awakening early Sunday morning, our crew had a lazy breakfast before slowly gearing up for the day. Group photos were taken in front of the boat, but it was later

decided that we needed to retake the photo for cosmetic purposes 😊. Today, the boat headed straight for the Shark Gutters at Flat Rock. We were determined to dive this wonderful site. Anchoring at the top end of the gutters, we descended the anchor line and were greeted with a very strong current. The current made it a very lazy drift down through the main gutter, until we reached the end and had to turn around and fight against it to get back to the anchor.

Unfortunately, there were no sharks this time 😞 but it was still an interesting dive. We all ended

surfacing up the wrong anchor line, but in those conditions, it wasn't worth fighting the extra 30m to get back to our anchor when we could grab the mermaid line from our boat at the surface. The advanced divers from the Uni-dive club wanted to try a deeper site during our surface interval. Upon arriving at the site dubbed, "Deep Middle" (or something like that, we were in open water) the current was deemed too hellish to dive in, so Ken took us to check out Boat Rock for the advanced divers, however, it was also too currently there as well. We motored over to the Manta Bommies for the next dive. This was a fantastic easy dive in a maximum of 12m again. There was little to no current at this site, and while the visibility was still only about 10m, there was plenty of life out and about. After an hours dive, the group surfaced and we headed back to once again partake in the dream of washing regulators in the bathtub before the soiled booties.

It was at this point where Scotty and myself had to part ways with the rest of the group and return to real life, I am sure one of the others will fill us in on what happened on the sunday evening and monday dives.

From my point of view it was a great weekend trip, with plenty learned and heaps of fun had by all members of the crew. There were some small incidents, like stubbing my toe and being attacked my damselfish and some weighting issues on the first dive, but it was all in good fun. Thanks again for the awesome weekend guys, it was a pleasure to dive with you and I look forward to the next

trip 😊